

THE AMERICAN VETERAN – EPISODE THREE, PART THREE

THIS IS THE AMERICAN VETERAN.
I'M JIM BENSON.

THIS MOMENT IN HISTORY, MAY 8TH 1945, VICTORY IN EUROPE DAY. BETWEEN 1942 AND 1945, 433 MEDALS OF HONOR WERE AWARDED AND OVER 400,000 AMERICAN SOLDIERS DIED. WE RECENTLY HAD THE CHANCE TO SPEAK WITH A FEW VETERANS WHO REMEMBER THIS DAY.

FAY STEELE, WORLD WAR TWO VETERAN: I WAS STATIONED AT CHARTRES, FRANCE WITH THE 9TH TROOP CARRIER COMMANDS' COMBAT CAMERA UNIT, AND WE GOT WORD THAT ALL THE GERMAN TROOPS IN DENMARK HAD SURRENDERED. SO THEY SENT 2 PHOTOGRAPHERS AND 2 REPORTERS UP TO DENMARK TO COPENHAGEN TO COVER THE CELEBRATION. AND AS WE FLEW INTO THE COPENHAGEN AIRPORT, WE DIDN'T KNOW THAT THE WAR WAS OVER. THEY DIDN'T TELL US UNTIL WE WERE ON THE GROUND. ANYWHERE WE WENT IN COPENHAGEN THEY COULD RECOGNIZE US AS AMERICANS SO THEY'D APPLAUD US AND WE ALL MUST HAVE SIGNED 1,000 AUTOGRAPHS.

DANIEL FUNK, WORLD WAR TWO VETERAN: V-E DAY, 1945 I WAS OUT ON DETAIL. WE WERE COLLECTING ABANDONED GERMAN AMMUNITION AND I DIDN'T KNOW THE WAR WAS OVER AT THE TIME UNTIL I GOT BACK TO THE COMPANY. AND I WAS VERY ELATED. WE MANAGED TO SMUGGLE IN ABOUT 4 BARRELS OF BEER AND I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT THE NEXT DAY.

WILFRED "MAC" McCARTY, WORLD WAR TWO VETERAN: OUR OUTFIT ON THE 5TH OF MAY LIBERATED MAULTHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP IN AUSTRIA. THAT'S WHERE I WAS VE NIGHT, SO IT WAS NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT FOR A VE CELEBRATION. WHEN I LEARNED ABOUT THE DIFFERENT CELEBRATIONS ALL OVER EUROPE I THOUGHT, MY GOSH, I MISSED OUT ON ALL OF THAT. LEAVE IT TO MACK TO BE IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME. STORY OF MY LIFE.

FRANK HAYDEN, WORLD WAR TWO VETERAN: I SAILED ON LIBERTY SHIPS AS A CADET MID-SHIPMAN DURING THE WAR BEGINNING IN 1943, CROSSING THE NORTH ATLANTIC, DODGING SUBMARINES. ON MAY 8TH, V-E DAY, I HAD BEEN AT THE U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY AND THEY GAVE ME LEAVE TO GO HOME TO BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, AND I HAD TO TRANSFER TRAINS AND GOT OFF AT TIMES SQUARE. AND THE NEWS BROKE OUT THAT IT WAS V-E DAY! IT WAS JUST COMPLETE BEDLAM. ANYBODY IN UNIFORM, WHICH I WAS STILL IN UNIFORM, TREATED US LIKE KINGS. WE WENT FROM ONE PARTY TO ANOTHER

PARTY AND WE HAD THE KEYS TO THE CITY. I FELT SO SORRY FOR THE GUYS WHO DIDN'T MAKE IT. THEY WERE THE REAL HEROES OF WORLD WAR II. NOT THE GUYS WHO CAME BACK, BUT THE GUYS WHO DIDN'T MAKE IT. I CONSIDER THEM THE HEROES.

BENSON: IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE YOUR WORLD WAR TWO STORY, YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE VETERAN'S HISTORY PROJECT SPONSORED BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

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THE AMERICAN VETERAN WILL BE RIGHT BACK WITH A PROFILE OF A SPECIAL VA VOLUNTEER.

END OF TRANSCRIPT